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ABSTRACT

This document is comprised of the two issues in volume 4 of "Parent News Offline," a publication of the National Parent Information Network (NPIN) designed to introduce those without Internet access to the activities and information available through NPIN. The Spring 2002 issue contains the following articles: (1) "Middle College High Schools: Supporting the Transition to Success" (Saran Donahoo); (2) "'Do I Have a Right To Be Involved?' Parents' Rights in Educating Their Children" (Ron Banks and Anne S. Robertson); and (3) "Parents 'Can' Play a Part in Raising Teacher Quality" (Peggy Patten). This issue includes a summary from "A Violence Prevention Resource Guide for Parents" on encouraging school success in the middle years. The Fall 2002 issue contains the following articles: (1) "Is Your Teen a Reluctant Reader?" (Jean Mendoza); (2) "Preschool through College Collaborations: What Parents Should Know" (Saran Donahoo); (3) "Accepting Parents' Different Levels of Involvement: One School's Story" (Peggy Patten); and (4) "Teaching Gifted Students: A View from the Field" (Peggy Patten). This issue includes a summary from "A Violence Prevention Resource Guide for Parents" on peer influences during the teen years. (HTH)

Parent News Offline, 2002.

Anne S. Robertson, Editor

**ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and
Early Childhood Education
University of Illinois**

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Parent News

Vol. 4, No. 1, Spring 2002

Offline

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Children's Research Center
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
51 Gerty Drive
Champaign, IL 61820-7469
800-583-4135 voice/tty
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Middle College High Schools: Supporting the Transition to Success

Saran Donahoo

Middle college high schools (MCHSs) are public, secondary education programs that are housed on a community college or university campus. These programs encourage high-school-age students to earn a high school diploma and continue their education beyond the secondary level. At a time when teachers and parents are looking for educational alternatives for students who are struggling in the traditional high school environment, MCHSs offer colleges and area school districts a unique opportunity for collaboration.

The first MCHS opened in 1973 and continues to operate at LaGuardia Community College in Long Island City, New York. This program was developed by LaGuardia Professor Janet Lieberman and her colleagues who felt that more needed to be done to help at-risk students complete high school requirements and continue on to college [1; 2]. Replicating the program developed at LaGuardia Community College, 21 MCHSs across the country now offer similar programs [3]. Since the MCHS concept is still new, there is limited research on the long-term benefits. But, as members of the Middle College High School Consortium, these schools strive to:

- improve attendance,
- improve academic performance,
- increase graduation rates,
- improve job placement rates, and
- raise the number of high school graduates who pursue higher education [1; 4].

In order to accomplish these goals, MCHSs eliminate many nonacademic programs, such as sports. These schools establish a strong academic focus that includes academic counseling, small classes, tutoring, and staff support. Additionally, MCHSs require students to participate in an internship program, which gives students an opportunity to gain job or career experience for school credit.

Being located on college campuses allows MCHSs to create a new type of educational institution. Although these schools are primarily focused on helping students earn high school diplomas, they also bridge the transition between secondary and higher education in a variety of ways. First, these schools provide students with an environment in which they are surrounded by college students who act as positive peer models [1]. Second, MCHSs offer dual enrollment opportunities that allow students to take college-level courses for both college and high school credit. The dual enrollment option not only helps students complete high school, but also helps prepare them for higher education by allowing them to

MCHSs provide students with an environment in which they are surrounded by college students who act as positive peer models.

<http://npin.org>

participate in collegiate academics in a well-supported environment. Students have the opportunity to “jump-start” their higher education careers. In some cases, MCHS students actually earn associate’s degrees within weeks of graduating from high school [2].

The Academy provides students with an opportunity to get their lives back on track.

One example of a successful MCHS is the Academy at Illinois Central College in East Peoria, Illinois. Opened in 1986, the school serves students

who have already dropped out of school or are at risk of leaving. According to Principal Jimmy Moore, many of the students enroll in the MCHS because they are no longer welcome in district high schools for a variety of reasons. Although some students leave within the first few weeks of enrolling because they are unwilling to do the work, many of the students who leave prior to graduation often return to the Academy to complete high school because they know that the staff will help them earn a diploma.

Despite the fact that the staff and instructors at the Academy at Illinois Central work with a population of students who have many difficulties, about three-quarters of them graduate with a high school diploma. One key to this success is the high level of individual interaction and contact between the staff and the students. Since the staff places a strong emphasis on providing both academic and life skills counseling to students, staff members are encouraged to give students more personal attention. For example, because more than 50% of the students have a history of substance abuse or chemical dependency, the Academy gives students access to a 12-step alcohol and drug rehabilitation program that holds regular meetings at the school. Rather than simply giving students a place to finish high school, Moore says, the Academy provides them with an opportunity to get their lives back on track.

Moore says that in addition to providing students with both academic and personal counseling, the overall program offered at the Academy is designed to help students complete high school as quickly as possible. The Academy maintains smaller class sizes than district high schools. The largest class at the Academy enrolls approximately 20 students. Second, the Academy offers only courses that students need to graduate, ensuring that all of the classes taken by students will help them earn their diplomas. Third, although students may establish dual enrollment in both the Academy and Illinois Central College, they must do well in their high school courses at the MCHS before being allowed to enroll in college courses. Attending college courses while

still in high school ensures that students are prepared for college-level work before they leave high school.

Information provided by Principal Moore suggests that the Academy is having a positive impact on its students. At the school since 1989, Moore states that the graduates either enlist in the military, enroll in college, or obtain employment within a year of earning their diplomas. Of the eleven students scheduled to graduate in December 2001, nine planned to enroll in college by the next fall and two had made arrangements to enter the armed forces. Moreover, many of the students who do not go on to college directly after graduation return to the Academy for assistance when they decide they are ready to earn a college degree.

For More Information

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/education/schoolgrants/announcements/announce-020319.htm>

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Middle College High School Consortium

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Adapted from a January/February 2002 online *Parent News* article (<http://npin.org/pnews/2002/pnew102/int102a.html>).

The Middle Years: **Encouraging School Success**

Perhaps it is not surprising that the link between doing poorly in school and engaging in other risky behaviors is well documented. It is also not surprising that children who do well in school and are connected to school through school activities such as music, sports, or clubs are less likely to become involved in risky activities such as substance abuse, crime, or violence. As parents, you have critical influence over your child's school success in several important areas. Those areas include:

- *Connectedness.* Encourage your child's attachment to parents, guardians, grandparents, teachers, or mentors who will support lasting relationships and friendships.
- *Competency.* Help your child develop academic and social skills, including the ability to solve problems and make age-appropriate, independent decisions.
- *Aspirations.* Support your child's ability to set goals for a successful future and develop strategies for achieving those goals.
- *Effective schools.* Help your child to find a supportive, safe learning environment that challenges all students to do well and that supports them in their efforts to do so.

Parents play an important role on their child's teaching team. Making time to attend parent-teacher conferences and school activities is one part of that role. Being available to help if the teachers have a concern about your child's progress also shows that you care. It helps to make time to talk to the teacher if you have questions or are worried about how your child is doing.

While some teachers may hesitate to intervene unless a child is lagging two or more grade levels behind other students in the class, the evidence suggests that early intervention is critical. The further behind a student falls in his or her school work, the more likely it is that he or she will fail and will develop a sense of hopelessness. Seek out the teacher and discuss what you can do before your child's academic problems become overwhelming.

One way that parents can help teachers identify problems early is by sharing their concerns and being open about relevant parts of their child's history. Parents can also take the lead and request an assessment if they are concerned that their child might have a learning disability. When parents, teachers, and school staff work together, most difficulties can be resolved and strategies can be developed that will help the child have a successful school experience.

The information contained in this summary is taken from the Middle Years chapter of the Violence Prevention Resource Guide for Parents by Peggy Patten and Anne S. Robertson (Champaign, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, 2001).



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ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education
University of Illinois, 29 Children's Research Center, 51 Gerty Dr., Champaign, IL 61820-7469
<http://npin.org> npin@uiuc.edu

*From the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and
Early Childhood Education . . .*

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education and the National Parent Information Network recently published *Violence Prevention Resource Guide for Parents*. This 91-page book explores the different but related sets of challenges children encounter in learning to avoid becoming victims or perpetrators of violence during three stages of youth: the early years (birth to 5), the middle years (6 to 12), and the teen years (13 to 18). Each section discusses useful lessons from research and practice about violence in children and offers practical suggestions parents can use to prevent violence at each stage.

The complete *Guide*, including reproducible *Parent Summary Sheets*, is available for \$15.00 [plus \$2.50 (U.S.) or \$5.00 (foreign) shipping and handling].

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“Do I Have a *Right* to Be Involved?” Parents’ Rights in Educating Their Children

Ron Banks and Anne S. Robertson

Parents whose children do not have an identified disability or special need do not have their rights and duties as part of their child’s teaching team defined clearly in the law. Not knowing their rights may prevent some parents from participating as directly as they would like to in the classroom or with school staff—especially if a problem arises at school that is difficult to resolve. Here are two answers to common questions parents have about their rights to participate in their children’s schooling:

Do I have the right to choose my child’s classroom placement and teacher? Classroom placement is typically decided by the principal after discussion with the teacher in an attempt to balance the needs in the classroom. Parents should talk with the principal early in the spring term about the type of classroom environment they think would work best for their child and share concerns about their child’s special needs or behavioral issues.

Do I have access to all of my child’s confidential student records? Several federal laws protect parents’ rights to access their child’s student records, but policies regarding

how parents can view their child’s records vary from school to school. Many schools simply provide the file for the parent when it is requested, while others may require a written request. Parents may want to make an appointment to talk with the principal if they have questions about information in the file.

Most disagreements parents have with teachers and school administrators can be resolved amicably with open and respectful communication. Parents may want to call the teacher to discuss a problem or arrange to meet at a convenient time before or after school. It may also be helpful for parents to review the school’s policies so that they understand the guidelines that the school must follow. Once they are familiar with the policies, parents can jot down some notes or ideas prior to meeting with the teacher.

For more in-depth coverage of these and other issues about parents’ rights in schools, and for a list of relevant resources, please go to: <http://npin.org/pnews/2002/pnew102/feat102.html>.



Adapted from a January/February 2002 online *Parent News* article (<http://npin.org/pnews/2002/pnew102/feat102.html>).

Parents Can Play a Part in Raising Teacher Quality

Peggy Patten

One of the few points of universal agreement in education is that having highly qualified teaching matters. But recent demands for better-qualified teachers are coming at a time of severe teacher shortages and increasing numbers of students.

One thing will not change: the role of parents in supporting both new and experienced teachers. Just as parent involvement helps children succeed in school, it can also help teachers be more successful in the classroom.

Some award-winning first-year teachers attributed some of their success to parents who:

- showed support for learning at home;
- communicated positive feedback about a teacher’s influence or performance;
- welcomed new teachers;
- volunteered to help in the classroom;
- supported fair discipline measures that teachers imposed;
- did not assume the worst about first-year teachers;
- made sure that children did their homework;
- offered their workplaces for field trips, when appropriate;
- talked to a teacher directly about a problem; and
- became active partners in education.

Parents can also work to promote teaching as a profession and to insure that their schools hire well-trained teachers.

- *See how your state teaching standards measure up.* (See http://www.hewittco.com/nasdtec/online_1.html for state-by-state information.)
- *Start a future teachers club.* Work with middle school and high school administrators and teachers to start a local chapter of Future Educators of America (<http://www.pdkintl.org/studser/sfea.htm>).
- *Encourage your local schools to establish partnerships with nearby schools of education.* Teacher input to university faculty keeps education schools focused on the day-to-day issues that teachers face.

Given the projections about the number of new teachers needed in our nation’s classrooms in the next few years, parents will have ample opportunity to forge partnerships with new teachers, with schools, and with community groups to help insure that all children have access to effective classroom teachers.



Adapted from a November/December 2001 online *Parent News* article (<http://npin.org/pnews/2001/pnew1101/int1101d.html>).

About NPIN and *Parent News Offline*

The National Parent Information Network (NPIN) was funded by the U.S. Department of Education in 1992 to collect and disseminate high-quality resources for parents. NPIN is supported through the ERIC system and maintained by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education and the ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education. NPIN's Web site is one of the largest noncommercial collections of parenting information on the Internet (<http://npin.org>). In addition to its Web site, NPIN offers question-answering services via a toll-free telephone number (800-583-4135) and by email through the AskERIC service (askeric@askeric.org).

Another service provided by NPIN is *Parent News*, an Internet magazine that focuses on topics of interest to parents and professionals who work with parents. Many of the articles featured in *Parent News* have been developed in direct response to frequently asked questions. *Parent News Offline* has been created in response to requests for a newsletter that would introduce those without Internet access to the activities and information available through NPIN. We encourage you to share both our online and offline resources, including ERIC/EECE Digests, with parenting groups, schools, and community initiatives.

NPIN Resources Linked to ED Satellite Town Meetings

Satellite Town Meetings are the U.S. Department of Education's monthly satellite programs about improvements in teaching, education, and parent involvement that are happening in our nation's schools and communities. Each show discusses a different topic and includes national experts as well as parents, local educators, and community leaders. The program is broadcast live on the third Tuesday of each month during the school year, from 8:00 to 9:00 p.m. Eastern time. Local schools and organizations are invited to host live satellite connections in their communities.

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education and the National Parent Information Network link to resources focused on recently broadcast Town Meeting discussions. Please see our Web site at:

<http://npin.org/initiatives.html>

For more information about Satellite Town Meetings, visit the U.S. Department of Education's Web site at:

<http://www.ed.gov/inits/stm/>

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**National Parent Information Network (NPIN)
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University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Children's Research Center
51 Gerty Drive
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Children's Research Center
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
51 Gerty Drive
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- *Don't push, but do hang in there.* Pressure from you may do more harm than good. It may be only a matter of time before a reluctant reader starts reading for fun.
- *Make literature part of life.* Let your teens catch you reading. Read aloud to them from a novel you enjoy (perhaps a "young adult" book). Stop at the library or bookstore together when you run errands. Offer a "book allowance" in addition to a regular allowance.
- *Help them discover their choices.* Keep "quick reads" around the house to entice a busy teen: short stories, poetry, newspapers, or magazines. Many teens like mysteries, adventures, humor, scary stories, or books about sports figures and other celebrities.
- *Find out what's happening at school.* Ask what your teen is reading in school so you can talk about those books together. If you feel the curriculum discourages love of reading, you might join a curriculum selection committee at the school. Meanwhile, you could sponsor an after-school book club featuring books students select.
- *Approach reading in a different way.* Take turns picking out audio books from the library, and listen to them together as you drive. Check out movie versions of "classic" or popular books. See how your teen likes the art and humor in picture books or cartoon anthologies.
- *Tease or challenge your teen to try something new.* See how your teen responds when you say, "This book might be too scary (or romantic or gross) for you." Try offering "forbidden" books. Hearing that "this book was banned in 50 schools" may entice an adolescent to give it a try!

Adapted from a March/April/May 2002 online *Parent News* article (<http://npin.org/pnews/2002/pnew302/int302b.html>).

Preschool through College Collaborations: What Parents Should Know

Saran Donahoo

Several states and local school districts—including El Paso, Texas; New York City; Oregon; and Georgia—have begun connecting pre-kindergarten and grades K-12 with postsecondary educational institutions in an arrangement known as P-16. P-16 takes a variety of forms, including aligning math curricula and assessments between K-12 and higher education, allowing high school students to take college courses for credit, and providing for the ongoing professional development of teachers. The common aim of

P-16 supporters believe that multi-level educational partnerships will provide better information to parents and students....

the programs is to encourage the sharing of information, resources, and services among all educational levels to encourage students' future success.

Supporters of P-16 collaborations cite several reasons why all educational levels need to place

a greater importance on working together than presently occurs. They say that a high school education is no longer enough to earn a living wage and that schools need to better prepare students to succeed in postsecondary study [4; 5]. Advocates of P-16 also believe that the various grade levels need to do a better job of sharing information with parents and students on how to prepare for postsecondary study [1; 2; 6]. Finally, P-16 supporters believe that collaboration between preschools, K-12 systems, and institutions of higher education will help to improve teacher training, making teachers more effective in the classroom [3; 7]. What better way to accomplish these goals than to partner early childhood, primary, and secondary educational institutions with postsecondary ones?

Critics point out that it may take years before the effectiveness of P-16 collaborations can be measured [6]. Critics also say that collaboration may make it difficult for grade levels to operate independently [6]. Unifying all levels of education into one system would take some control and decision-making powers away from administrators at each of the various grade levels.

Whether P-16 is available in your area or not, here are some things you can do to ensure that your child is ready for postsecondary education when the time comes:

- *Start thinking about college before high school.* The sooner, the better.

- *Find out what your child must do to graduate from high school.* Get this information as early as possible. It is best to know before your child starts high school.
- *Help your child pick possible colleges early in high school.* It is easier to find out what you need to do when you know where you want to go.
- *Find out what tests your child will have to take.* Students are usually required to take three sets of tests. These tests help decide if students are ready to graduate from high school, to enter college, and to take college courses. Sometimes the exams are different; sometimes they are the same.
- *Find out what programs are available in your area.* Some school districts, colleges, and universities are already working together. Programs include tutoring, mentoring, college tours, and dual credit.

High school counselors, school district offices, and college recruiters can help you find more information. Your local parent-teacher organization may also be able to assist you.

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Adapted from a January/February 2002 online *Parent News* article (<http://npin.org/pnews/2002/pnew302/feat302.html>).

The Teen Years: **Peer Influences**

Friends can encourage one another to do well in school, stay away from drugs and alcohol, and refrain from sex. Just as easily, friends can challenge one another to take dangerous risks and reject school or your family's values. Some research agrees with what traditional wisdom tells us: keeping "bad company" encourages risky and delinquent behavior.

Research also suggests that children who have an ongoing pattern of aggressive behavior or rejection are more likely, as teenagers, to be friends with other aggressive youth. Gangs are a modern-day example of a group of antisocial friends. Only a small number of teens join gangs, but gang members are the perpetrators in three-fourths of the murder and assault acts committed by youth. Gang violence today is deadlier than gang violence of previous years largely because the weapons of choice are automatic weapons rather than chains or switchblades. Not surprisingly, one of the early signs that a teen is in trouble is affiliation with gangs or groups of antisocial friends.

While parents cannot pick their child's friends, they can have a powerful, often indirect, influence on how their teens select friends in two primary ways:

- *Parental monitoring.* When parents know where their teen is, who their teen is with, and what their teen is doing, the teen is less likely to get involved in deviant behavior. The most successful parental monitoring takes place when parents show a genuine interest in their child's activities and are warm and caring rather than intrusive.
- *Parental guidance about where the teen will spend time.* Parents can set boundaries about the appropriate places where teens can spend their out-of-school time. For example, teens can spend out-of-school time involved with school clubs, sports teams, recreation centers, volunteer work, religious organizations, a job, or home activities. Spending time in these ways minimizes the amount of time a teen has available for unproductive or potentially dangerous activities.

If you are concerned about your teen's friendships or about gang activity in your neighborhood, you can talk with school counselors, mental health professionals, religious leaders, or the police.

The information contained in this summary is taken from the Teen Years chapter of the Violence Prevention Resource Guide for Parents by Peggy Patten and Anne S. Robertson (Champaign, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, 2001).



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ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education
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The complete *Guide*, including reproducible *Parent Summary Sheets*, is available for \$15.00 [plus \$2.50 (U.S.) or \$5.00 (foreign) shipping and handling].

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Accepting Parents' Different Levels of Involvement: One School's Story

Peggy Patten

Although parents assume their involvement in school matters less as children get older, parental involvement continues to influence student achievement and attitudes through middle and secondary school. The influence of parent involvement on school achievement holds true regardless of the parents' income, level of education, or employment status [1; 2; 3]. Many successful middle and secondary schools have created positions responsible for coordinating parent involvement.

In a recent *Parent News* article, Peggy Patten talked with Barbara Linder, who started in 1992 as a parent volunteer at Urbana Middle School (UMS) in Urbana, Illinois, and who now works as coordinator of the school's Community Connections program. Linder wants to "facilitate a continuum of involvement with parents." For parents who participate only by talking with their child at home, Linder encourages teachers to send home weekly updates on projects, units, and assignments. Other parents tend to participate when they are called in for conferences, which Linder helps arrange to involve child as well as teacher

input. Still other parents volunteer as tutors, general classroom aides, and clerical staff. Some 35 to 50 parents regularly volunteer a total of 2,500 to 3,000 hours per year at UMS. Additionally, the program brings in participants from local businesses, universities, and religious communities, and it also helps students get out into the community through service learning projects.

See the full article at <http://npin.org/pnews/2002/pnew302/int302a.html>.

Sources

[1] Burke, Mary Ann. (2001). *Recruiting and using volunteers in meaningful ways in secondary schools* [Online]. Available: http://www.nassp.org/news/bltn_rcrt_vlntrs1001.html.

[2] Cotton, Kathleen, & Wiklund, K. R. (1989). *Parent involvement in education* [Online]. Available: <http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/3/cu6.html>. (ERIC Document No. ED312030)

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Teaching Gifted Students: A View from the Field

Peggy Patten

Parents AskERIC has received a number of questions about how different schools educate students categorized as gifted and talented. *Parent News* talked to Dr. Nancy Hertzog—assistant professor of special education and the director of the University Primary School at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign—about the approach she takes in teaching gifted and talented students.

Schools use several variations of basic programming models—some giving gifted students special activities for part of the day, others permanently putting gifted students in separate classrooms with curricula distinct from those of general classes. Hertzog prefers a model called *differentiating instruction*.

"Ideally we want a core curriculum that is rich, engaging, and meaningful for all students in the general classroom," says Hertzog. "In any classroom, teachers have students with a range of abilities and a range of deficits. Some students are highly skilled in math, but may struggle with reading; some students have difficulty expressing themselves on paper, but can do so effectively

orally; some students are gifted in the fine arts, but may find core academic subjects challenging; some students may excel in reading, but need a lot of assistance with writing.... The optimal classroom situation is one in which a teacher can differentiate her instruction to respond to this variance among learners in the classroom."

Hertzog lists two elements of successful differentiated instruction: flexible grouping and regular assessment. "In a classroom using differentiated instruction, students work with a variety of peers in small and large groups," she says, with some groups involving students of many ability levels and others involving students of the same level.

Also important, says Hertzog, is "meaningful and regular assessment. In order for a teacher to plan the next instructional steps, he must know what students understand and do not understand," says Hertzog. Knowing that a child got a wrong answer "does not help a teacher know what children do not understand."

To read the text of the entire interview, go to <http://npin.org/pnews/2002/pnew102/int102c.html>.

About NPIN and *Parent News Offline*

The National Parent Information Network (NPIN) is funded by the U.S. Department of Education to collect and disseminate high-quality resources for parents, supported through the ERIC system, and maintained by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education and the ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education. NPIN has one of the largest noncommercial collections of parenting information on the Internet (<http://npin.org>) and offers question-answering services via a toll-free telephone number (800-583-4135) and by email through the AskERIC service (askeric@askeric.org).

Parent News is NPIN's Internet magazine that focuses on topics of interest to parents and professionals who work with parents. *Parent News Offline* presents selected *Parent News* articles for those without Internet access. We encourage you to share both our online and offline resources with parenting groups, schools, and community initiatives.

In each article, references identified with an ED (ERIC document) or EJ (ERIC journal) number are cited in the ERIC database. Most documents are available in ERIC microfiche collections at more than 1,000 locations worldwide (see <http://www.ed.gov/Programs/EROD/>). They can also be ordered through EDRS: 800-443-ERIC or online at <http://www.edrs.com/Webstore/Express.cfm>. Journal articles are available from the original journal, interlibrary loan services, or article reproduction clearinghouses such as Ingenta (800-296-2221).

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New Satellite Programming Format; Same NPIN Coverage

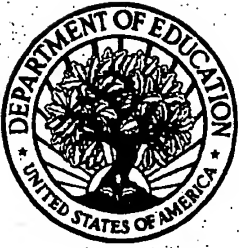
Parents and educators—get ready for a new monthly television series about ways to ensure children's educational success: *Education News Parents Can Use*. This new program takes the place of the Department of Education's *Satellite Town Meeting* and will keep many of its predecessor's signature features—the live format, viewer call-ins, and lively discussion. *Education News* also focuses on information and resources of value to parents and families, featuring brief segments, including one-on-one interviews; “how-to” demonstrations; more video and graphics; and brief conversations with parents, educators, education experts, and community, business, and religious leaders.

Education News airs live on the third Tuesday of each month during the school year, but taped re-broadcasts will also be available. Find the tentative schedule, learn more about your local viewing options, and sign up at <http://registerevent.ed.gov/>.

NPIN will continue to provide parents with useful resources on the topics covered in *Education News* broadcasts.

**National Parent Information Network (NPIN)
ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and
Early Childhood Education
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Children's Research Center
51 Gerty Drive
Champaign, IL 61820-7469**

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